

Amendments to the Claims

Please do not enter the Amendment After Final Rejection filed March 13, 2005.

Please amend the claims as set forth in “Claims After Amendment (Clean Version)”, which follows, and which is followed by “Claims After Amendment (Marked Up Version)”.

Claims After Amendment (Clean Version)

1. (Currently amended) A tray for installing, on a tire mounted on a vehicle wheel, an oriented tire chain having side chains and cross chains, by a method in which the arms of a U-shaped installation tool are connected to the ends of the side chain at one end of the tire chain and the tool is drawn circumferentially around the stationary tire with the chain trailing the tool and sliding over the surface of the tire, which tray comprises:

 a base having a longitudinal axis and, at opposite ends of that axis, a rear end and a front, entrance end;

 an exterior rear wall and exterior side walls projecting upwardly from the base; a plurality of vehicle supports projecting upwardly from the base and being spaced from each other and from the side walls so as to define longitudinal channels and transverse channels for receiving and confining laid-out side chains and cross chains, respectively;

 a well for receiving side chains and cross chains which have not been laid out; an interior wall projecting upwardly from the base;

 an upwardly facing compartment adjacent the well for receiving the U-shaped tool and protecting it from damage due to the weight of the vehicle, which compartment has a bottom defined by the base and a side defined by the interior wall, the interior wall being located between the well and the compartment, so as to keep said chain which has not been laid out contained in the well and thereby prevent it from coming into the compartment during storage or handling of the tray.

2. (Currently amended) A tray according to claim 1 wherein the interior wall defining the compartment is sufficiently high to protect the tool from damage by direct contact with the tire and to keep chain in the well from coming over the tool during storage or handling and then damaging the tool by being forced into it by the tire.

3. (Original) A tray according to claim 1 wherein the compartment is defined by a plurality of interior walls.

4. (Currently amended) A tray according to claim 1 wherein (i) the well is located between the rearmost vehicle support and the rear wall and (ii) the compartment is defined by a plurality of interior walls, the base, the rear wall, and portions of the side walls adjacent to the rear wall.

Claim 5 (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) A tray according to claim 1 wherein the side walls have stacking lugs on their top surfaces and stacking recesses on their bottom surfaces directly beneath the stacking lugs.

Claim 7 (Canceled)

8. (Previously presented) A tray according to claim 1 wherein the interior wall separates the well from a substantial portion of the compartment.

9. (Original) A tray according to claim 1 which further comprises a chain element holder having a passage for receiving, locating, and restraining, from lateral movement parallel to the base, a chain element at or near the end of each side chain opposite the end connected to the U-shaped tool.

10. (Original) A tray for installing, on a tire mounted on a vehicle wheel, an oriented tire chain having side chains and cross chains, which tray comprises:

 a base having a longitudinal axis and, at opposite ends thereof, a rear end and a front, entrance end;

 a rear wall and side walls projecting upwardly from the base;

 a plurality of vehicle supports projecting upwardly from the base and being spaced from each other and from the side walls so as to define longitudinal channels and

transverse channels for receiving and confining laid-out side chains and cross chains, respectively;

a signal-initiating device comprising a tire-actuated position-indicating switch which initiates a continuing signal when, and only when, the tire is positioned within a zone defined by two predetermined boundaries along the longitudinal axis, so that the device is able to sense and signal the stopped position of the tire as well as the position of the tire while the tire is still moving.

11. (Original) A tray according to claim 10 wherein the switch is attached to a vehicle support in such a manner that the switch and the zone are movable parallel to the longitudinal axis.

12. (Previously presented) A tray according to claim 11 wherein the switch is located in the frontmost vehicle support.

13. (Original) A tray according to claim 12 wherein the frontmost vehicle support is substantially longer than any other vehicle support, in a direction along the longitudinal axis.

14. (Original) A tray according to claim 10 wherein the distance between the boundaries defining the zone may be varied by adjusting the switch.

15. (Original) A tray according to claim 10 wherein the switch has at least two horizontally spaced surfaces for contacting the tread of the tire, the first of the surfaces being capable of sensing a downward force within the footprint of the tire and the second of the surfaces being capable of sensing an absence of a downward force just outside the footprint.

16. (Previously presented) A tray according to claim 15 wherein the spaced surfaces are on a platform rotatable about a horizontal fulcrum in a plane perpendicular to the longitudinal axis.

17. (Original) A tray for installing, on a tire mounted on a vehicle wheel, an oriented tire chain having side chains and cross chains, which tray comprises:

a base having a longitudinal axis and, at opposite ends of that axis, a rear end and a front, entrance end;

a rear wall and side walls projecting upwardly from the base;

a plurality of vehicle supports projecting upwardly from the base and being spaced from each other and from the side walls so as to define longitudinal channels and transverse channels for receiving and confining laid-out side chains and cross chains, respectively;

a well for receiving side chains and cross chains which have not been laid out; interior walls defining a compartment adjacent the well for receiving and protecting, from damage due to the weight of the vehicle, a U-shaped tool having spaced arms connected to the ends of the side chains;

a signal-initiating device comprising a tire-actuated position-indicating switch which initiates a continuing signal when, and only when, the tire is positioned within a zone defined by two predetermined boundaries along the longitudinal axis, so that the device is able to sense and signal the stopped position of the tire as well as the position of the tire while the tire is still moving.

18. (Original) A tray according to claim 17 wherein the interior walls defining the compartment are sufficiently high to protect the tool from damage by direct contact with the tire and to keep chain in the well from coming between the tire and the tool during storage or handling and then damaging the tool by indirect contact with the tire.

19. (Original) A tray according to claim 17 wherein the well is located between the rearmost vehicle support and the rear wall and the compartment is further defined by the rear wall and portions of the side wall adjacent thereto.

20. (Previously presented) A tray according to claim 17 wherein the side walls have a relatively greater height defining the well, and a relatively lesser height near the supports, so as to contain the side chains during storage and handling of the tray yet permit free access to the side chains and unhindered lateral movement thereof during installation of the tire chain, the greater height being at least as great as the height of the supports and the lesser height being less than the height of the supports.

21. (New) A tray according to claim 1 wherein the compartment is U-shaped.

22. (New) A tray according to claim 1 wherein the interior wall has a height at least as great as the height of the tool, so that the tool does not project above the top of the interior wall when the tire chain is loaded in the tray and the tool is disposed in the compartment.